Brockton Public Schools’ Use of Professional Development to Support Evidence Collection

As part of an evaluation of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework (EEF), SRI and its partners (Abt Associates, Nancy Brigham and Associates, and J Koppich & Associates) issued a statewide call to districts for examples of the artifacts, practices, materials, and tools they have used successfully to support EEF implementation. The objective is to disseminate more widely promising district-developed EEF implementation strategies that may be useful to other districts.

This brief describes a workshop that Brockton Public Schools developed for evaluators and teachers to support evidence collection, a critical element of the educator evaluation process. Educators are responsible for collecting artifacts of practice that demonstrate their progress on goals and standards. The Quality vs. Quantity: Evidence Collection for Educator Growth workshop is featured because it provides concrete guidance about how to make the educator evaluation process meaningful and as simple as possible. Described here is why the workshop was developed, workshop content and how it was delivered, and lessons learned. Finally, this brief outlines how other districts might adopt the workshop.

The materials for this workshop can be found here:

- Workshop Presentation Slides
- Workshop Facilitator Notes

1 The information in this brief is based on interviews of Brockton central office and school staff members about the workshop as well as a review of the workshop materials.
Context
During the first year that Brockton educators were required to collect evidence as part of EEF, evaluators reported that the educators spent too much time collecting evidence, with limited benefit to their practice. The Brockton Joint Labor/Management Educator Evaluation Task Force, an advisory body of administrators and teachers led by two educator evaluation specialists (district administrators who serve as experts on evaluation activities), recognized that educators and evaluators needed more specific guidance on implementing the evidence collection process effectively. Accordingly, a subcommittee of the task force, the Joint Labor Management Committee, created a district-wide professional development workshop, Quality vs. Quantity: Evidence Collection for Educator Growth, using materials on the collection of quality evidence adapted from Teachers 21 (http://www.teachers21.org/).

The educator evaluation specialists’ objective for the Quality vs. Quantity workshop was to help teachers reconceptualize evidence collection as useful rather than burdensome and as an opportunity to reflect on and improve their teaching practices. The Quality vs. Quantity workshop medium is a PowerPoint presentation with accompanying script that educators in other districts can easily use.

The educator evaluation specialists trained Brockton head teachers in each school to facilitate the workshop for school faculty at the beginning of the school year.

Brockton’s head teachers are nonevaluative teacher leaders whose responsibilities include providing peer-to-peer support within a building. Head teachers are responsible for delivering all educator evaluation professional development and serving as the go-to person for teachers with any EEF questions. They serve as a conduit of communication between the educator evaluation specialists and school staff. Head teachers were able to help refine the workshop to meet the specific needs of the educators in their buildings.

Content of Quality vs. Quantity Workshop
The workshop provides specific guidance for educators in collecting (or planning to collect) evidence. The guidance focuses on the process of collecting evidence, and not solely on the materials themselves, to help educators reflect on and identify instructional strengths as well as areas needing improvement. Workshop facilitators assist educators in carefully selecting a small number of quality artifacts that reflect their work. Through a thoughtful selection process, educators begin to reflect about their own practice and goals throughout the year.

Drawing on participants’ experience, the workshop aims to:
- Help educators recognize that evidence should relate to multiple standards as well as their SMART goals.
- Guide educators as they reflect on and analyze their practice, while emphasizing that evidence represents a sample of their practice and is not meant to be inclusive of all that they do.
- Emphasize that evidence is specific to each educator; this process is not one size fits all, given differences in teacher goals and practices.
- Clarify that educators do not need to identify evidence for each indicator.

The workshop is organized around four questions, each addressing a specific EEF Model Rubric Standard. The questions are intended to guide evidence collection.

- To what degree are students learning important skills, knowledge, and concepts? (Standard I: Curriculum Planning and Assessment)
- To what degree are students invested in learning? (Standard II: Teaching All Students)

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2 According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) guidance, indicators “describe specific knowledge, skills, and performance for each Standard. For example, there are three Indicators in Standard I of the teacher rubric: Curriculum and Planning; Assessment; and Analysis.”
http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/PartIII.pdf

3 According to ESE guidance, the Model Rubrics “are designed to help educators and evaluators (1) develop a consistent, shared understanding of what proficient performance looks like in practice, (2) develop a common terminology and structure to organize evidence, and (3) make informed professional judgments about formative and summative performance ratings on each Standard and overall.”
http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/PartIII.pdf
Workshop Delivery

- The workshop is designed as a 2-hour training session.
- Head teachers deliver the workshop to a school's full faculty with the expectation that participants will break into groups to complete hands-on activities.
- Head teachers have the flexibility to adjust a given workshop to fit the needs of their school and educators. For example, the workshop calls for small-group activities throughout the training; Head teachers can group educators by grade, subject, or some other category to align with the school's needs.

The workshop also emphasizes the value of systematic evidence collection over the course of the year. Before submitting evidence to evaluators, educators should thoughtfully review the suite of materials they have collected and carefully select items that best represent their work. Some teachers photograph or scan potential evidence and save it electronically throughout the year. They can then more easily review all their potential artifacts and upload exemplars to the district's evaluation platform (Baseline Edge) with minimal burden.

Implementation Lessons

Some important lessons have emerged from Brockton about the evidence collection process in general and implementation of this workshop, including:

- The focus of evidence collection should be on quality over quantity, and the district should provide supports to educators and evaluators to help them identify quality evidence that represents their work.
- Teachers were pleased to learn that one piece of evidence may apply to multiple standards. For example, one standards-based unit of instruction could serve as evidence for Standards 1 through 4. The workshop illustrated connections across the standards and helped teachers identify evidence that may apply to multiple standards.
- Including all departments and grade levels in the same workshop enabled participants to brainstorm on new ideas with one another and also generated rich within-school discussions.

Educators’ Reactions to the Workshop

- Brockton teachers have responded positively to the **Quality vs. Quantity** workshop. Head teachers have observed decreased anxiety about the evidence collection process in 2014–15.
- Realizing that a single piece of evidence could be used to represent work pertaining to multiple standards was an aha moment for many teachers.
- A special education teacher reported that it was helpful to learn that evidence is specific to each teacher. Because this teacher works with the same students for up to 3 years, her goals differ from those of educators who work with students for only 1 year—and so the evidence she collects differs as well.

Participants are presented with concrete criteria to consider when identifying evidence:

- Evidence should tell a story about a teacher’s practice and growth over the year.
- The best representation of practice comes from examples of daily work.
- Quality evidence generally falls into three broad categories:
  - Products of practice that emphasize “naturally occurring products of day-to-day work”.
  - Multiple Measures of Student Learning, Growth and Achievement that demonstrate students’ progress through informal assessments as well as traditional standardized assessments.
  - Other evidence related to Standards of Practice that showcases the behind-the-scenes work educators routinely do outside the regular school day and classroom. Examples are inviting students’ families to a school event, sending out a newsletter to inform families about classroom activities, and serving on committees or community groups connected to the school.

Workshop participants work in groups to brainstorm items that could be used as evidence for each standard. They then report out on their examples of evidence. As participants share their examples, workshop facilitators also highlight items associated with multiple standards.
• Administrators’ participation in the workshop was beneficial, as they and educators from their building received the same guidance. As a result, administrators were better equipped to answer questions about the process both during and after the workshop.

• The workshop encouraged teachers to be more reflective about their practice by considering how evidence related to their respective individual educator plans and SMART goals.

The *Quality vs. Quantity* workshop continues to evolve. Brockton will offer it to new teachers in fall 2015. The Joint Task Force is also working on a new version of the workshop for evaluators and administrators. The revised workshop will incorporate guidance about how to review evidence and develop consistent language for providing educators with feedback. The district plans to hold debriefing meetings with evaluators across the district to discuss the changes they see in the quality of evidence submitted for review.

### Adapting the *Quality vs. Quantity* Workshop in Other Districts

Districts might consider convening key stakeholders to assess their educators’ needs and to determine whether the content and format of the workshop need to be adapted accordingly. Districts can adopt workshop materials as is or adapt certain aspects of the workshop to better meet their needs, including:

- **Duration and format:** The workshop can be conducted during faculty meetings, district-wide meetings, or during other professional development times.

- **Audience:** The workshop can be adapted for different groups of educators and evaluators. For example, at the school level, the workshop could be offered to the full faculty, grade-level teams, resource teachers, or department teams.

- **Content:** The content of the workshop could be adapted for caseload educators (e.g., special education teachers) or specifically for evaluators.

Depending on districts’ local needs, the amount of time required to implement this approach is likely to vary. The specific cost elements in Brockton included time for the educator evaluation specialists to carry out the following activities: demonstrate the workshop presentation to the task force, obtain task force members’ feedback, and adjust the presentation accordingly. The educator evaluation specialists repeated that process with the head teachers and, once the presentation was finalized, trained the head teachers.

### Additional Information

For more details about this resource, please contact the Brockton Educator Growth and Evaluation Network at BEGEN@bpsma.org.